

General Secretary's Report



Hello and welcome to the latest edition of The Meat Hygienist.

Once again, I am pleased to welcome Ian Robinson as our guest editor. He has kindly stepped in to assist David Ogden, who currently has no internet access as a result of the winter storms off the North coast of Scotland. The joys of remote living in one of the most picturesque areas of the United Kingdom.

This has been a very busy, and no doubt stressful time for some, so far this year, with the increased pressure caused by the high levels of inflation, and increases to mortgages and daily costs for essential items. This has not been helped by uncertainty in the meat industry, which has resulted in a number of sites closing. This always causes concern, and I'm pleased to know that all the staff affected have been redeployed. However, this can result in increased hours both at work and for the daily commute. A situation I found myself in a number of years ago.

We have also just had one of the two major Muslim festivals, culminating in the period of Qurbani at the very end of June. Once again, our dedicated Veterinary and Meat Hygiene Inspectors / Official Auxiliaries have ensured that the massive extra demand has been delivered in a safe and wholesome way, by maintaining the highest standards for public health, animal health and welfare, despite the very long, and increased hours required. My thanks to everyone involved.

National Annual General Meeting

The National Annual General Meeting took place in Bristol on April 29th, and I would like to thank those members who were able to attend in person. One very pleasant task was being able to welcome new members to Council. This year we were delighted to welcome Marta Ostrowska, who has been elected as the Divisional Secretary for the South West, and Jackie Malone from Northern Ireland.

As well as the usual items of business, such as the annual summary of the Associations activities, and the election of Officers, there was also a couple of formal proposals to consider. These were made by the Midlands Division and the South West Division.

The first was an amendment to our Rule book to officially include Northern Ireland as a listed Division. We now have a healthy number of new members from Northern Ireland, who have been represented on the National Council by Stuart Wilson, John McKeever and Jackie Malone. They are currently working behind the scenes to get everything in place for the newest Division to fully operate, and I'm sure they will be pleased to hear from any of our Northern Irish members.

The second proposal came from the South West Division, and you will be able to see the first instalment elsewhere in this edition of *The Meat Hygienist*. One recurring theme from the READ days, that the Food Standards Agency hold, is the need for refresher training and Continuous Professional Development. With this in mind the proposal has now committed the Association to providing regular training quizzes etc with each edition. These might take the form of identifying pathological conditions, parasitology etc, from pictures, questions or crosswords. Just a light-hearted way to refresh your knowledge. Further details will be in the article, so do have a go.

The meeting also had a change to one of the senior roles within the Association. Angus Lowden, who has been our Treasurer for more than a decade, announced last year that he was going to stand down at this AGM. This gave us the opportunity to find a successor, and for Angus to give them some training in the role. When Angus took over, he was informed that it would only take up ten minutes a week, but it certainly is a lot busier now! I am delighted to welcome Darren Pickering as our new Treasurer, and I'm sure that he will do a great job in the role. I also wish Angus all the very best, as he will have more time to spend with his family. However, he is still the Divisional Secretary for Scotland North, and a vital member of the AMI team at the EWFC. The Association was pleased to present Angus with a gift of a fine Scottish Malt, with our Vice-President John Pratt doing the honours. John and Angus are pictured below.



Seminar 2023

The Trustees are continuing with the planning for this year's annual seminar, which will be held over the weekend of Friday September 8th to Sunday September 10th, at Harper Adams University. The full lineup of speakers will be confirmed in due course, and published on our dedicated seminar page on the website at www.meatinspectors.co.uk As well as Operational updates from across the whole of the United Kingdom, we are also delighted to be welcoming some first time speakers, and the return of some of our more popular speakers over a number of years. The Trust hope that there will be topics to appeal to a wide ranging audience.

There will be the usual places that are part of the membership packages with the Food Standards Agency, Food Standards Scotland, and the Department for Agriculture, the Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland. There will also be some sponsorship available from your local Division, with details from the Midlands included in this edition, so please speak to your Divisional Secretary if you would like to attend. There is a registration form included with this edition. Please can you return them to our seminar co-ordinator, Stephen Holden.

Professional recognition

This is a topic which continues to have developments, some of which have recently come about as a result of conversations on different topics. Ian Robinson has some details that he can share with you all, so be sure to check out his guest editorial. As with all of our discussions on Professional Recognition, the Council will only act after consulting with the membership on any changes that affect the Association or yourselves. Our autonomy is always at the centre of the discussions we have with interested parties.

EWFC

The EWFC met in April in Castlecomer in Ireland, and I would like to thank our Irish colleagues for the great welcome we all received. For me, I had the unusual luxury of being able to fly to Dublin from my local airport in Cornwall, thereby keeping my carbon footprint to the barest minimum.

Apart from the usual updates from each member state, it was interesting to note that many of the concerns we have, are reflected across Europe. Of particular note was the switch by one member's equivalent to the FSA, from an inspection model that had privately employed Inspectors, back to State employed. The reason given was poor audit results by the State Veterinary Service. This is a fear that has been expressed here, so it can only be hoped that the lessons will be learned as alternatives are looked at.

The meeting also spent a lot of time discussing the upcoming International Congress that is being organised in conjunction with our Austrian colleagues in Vienna. This event will cover a day and a half in October (12th and 13th), and is expected to have over two hundred delegates from across Europe. The event is titled 'What will our food of tomorrow look like? Nutrition in Change as a Challenge for Official Food Control', and follows the European Commission allowing the use of alternative sources of protein such as insects. Anyone watching the BBC news, might have seen the report on using flour produced from crickets in Italian pasta. This is a subject which will no doubt become more relevant as pressure increases to reduce carbon emissions in the agricultural sector.

Angus, Ron and myself are all attending the congress, so we will be able to update the Association Council afterwards.

As always, if you wish to keep updated on the work of the EWFC, please visit their website at ewfc.org.

I would like to take this opportunity in wishing you all have some well-deserved time off during the summer months. I look forward to meeting as many members who are able to attend, at this year's seminar.

Regards,

Jeremy